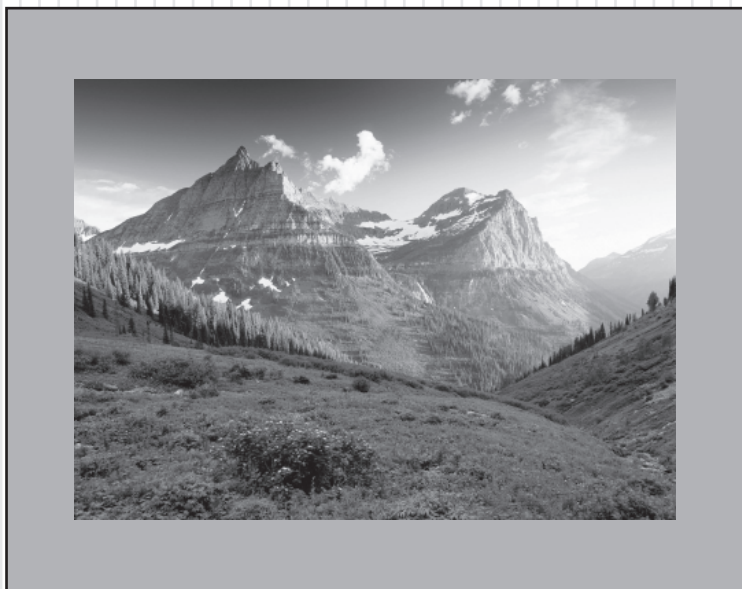


Montana
Comprehensive Assessment
System (MontCAS, Phase 2)
Criterion-Referenced Test (CRT)

COMMON CONSTRUCTED-RESPONSE ITEM RELEASE
READING, GRADE 10

2007



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Reading

Session 3

Totem poles represent an important part of the Northwest Coast Indians' culture. Read the following article about this fascinating art form and then answer the question that follows.

Totem Pole Carvers: Yesterday and Today

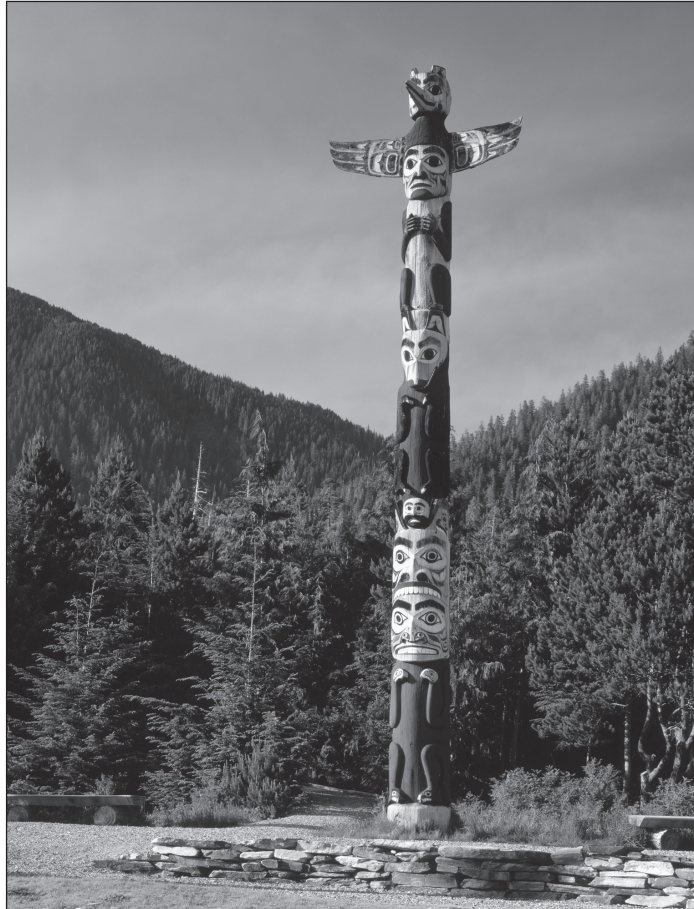
Toni A. Watson

A trunk of western red cedar and an adz were all an artist needed to make a totem pole two hundred years ago. It is much the same today.

The totem pole, more than anything else, is the trademark of the Northwest Coast Indians. Only wealthy and respected families were allowed to own a totem pole. When a chief needed a pole, he commissioned a carver to make it. Some poles took a year or more to finish, and the carver was well paid in blankets, food, and other valuables. The owner of the pole also had to feed and house the carver while he worked. Trained from childhood, skilled carvers could become very wealthy.

Before a carver began his work, an elder taught him about the ancestors and crests, or symbols, of the family that wanted the totem pole. The design itself was always left to the carver.

The carver worked in secret, sometimes behind a screen, because the symbols used were the property of the owner. When the owner was satisfied with the symbols the artist had chosen, the carver drew in the design with charcoal. After adzing and splitting away the wood to give form to the figures, he finished the



final details and shaping with curved knives.

The carver also was responsible for painting the pole, although not all poles were painted. The parts painted and the choice of colors depended on the tradition of the area. Red, black, and green were the most commonly used colors.

Totem poles are the tallest wood carvings in the world. In the nineteenth century, the tallest poles were about 60 feet high. In earlier days, sometimes hundreds of people hauled on the ropes, raising a pole to its upright position. Modern pole-raising equipment (block and tackle and mechanical cranes) has

enabled longer poles to be carved. In the village of Alert Bay, on Vancouver Island, the world's tallest totem pole soars an astounding 173 feet into the sky.

Several factors, including the 1884 ban on potlatching, caused a decline in the carving of new totem poles. Disease and war had drastically reduced the population, and carvers began dying without passing their knowledge on to the next generation. Totem poles were felled, sold, or even cut up for firewood.

Some southern Kwakiutl people continued to potlatch in secret. A few carvers continued to create masks, dishes, and other smaller items. The best-known carver was Charlie James, born in 1867, who taught his skills to his stepson, Mungo Martin.

9 In 1950, a major renewal of the art began with a totem pole restoration project at the University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology. The museum hired Martin to reproduce old and decaying Kwakiutl poles. This thread of continuity was largely responsible for pulling West Coast Indian art back from the brink of extinction. Martin continued this work at the Provincial Museum in Victoria, working with two other southern Kwakiutl carvers, Henry Hunt and his young son, Tony.

Martin established the Thunderbird Park carving program in the early 1950s. As the museum states, “Under his direction, the carving program quickly proved to be of wider importance than anyone had dreamed possible. Initially planned to last three years, it endured more than thirty.” Martin and his apprentices worked in an open building, on public view, and the carvers soon became one of the most popular features of the museum. Local residents and museum visitors would stop to watch them work, to ask questions, and to learn something of the ways of Indian people.

“Mungo’s most important role was as a teacher. He realized he was one of the last knowledgeable totem carvers and was determined to pass his skills and experience on to young Indian artists. He succeeded well. Virtually all of the Indian artists practicing today owe some debt to Mungo Martin, either through working with him directly or through learning from one of his students.”

Mungo Martin died in 1962, and his son-in-law, Henry Hunt, was appointed chief carver at the museum, where he remained for fourteen years. The Hunt family tree includes twenty-two men and

women from three generations who have practiced traditional arts in one form or another.

Traditionally, only men practiced woodworking, but today a few women also practice the art. Ellen Neel, Mungo Martin’s niece, carved totem poles. (She died in 1966.) Other women carvers include Dorothy Horner, Myrtle Laidlaw, Sandra Westly, and Valerie Tait Stewart.

Many modern totem pole artists work by hand with chisels, knives, and adzes that they make themselves. They also may use chain saws for the initial shaping and rough cuts.

Several years ago, two young carvers, Steve Brown and Wayne Price, were reproducing an old pole for a family. The grandchildren of the original carver asked that the new pole be carved without power tools. Although skilled in the use of modern tools, the two carvers worked through the winter of 1985–86 “using only hand tools that we could see had been used by the original artist. We completed the work in five months.”

It is not unusual for Nishga carver Norman Tait to include some secret detail in his work. One pole at the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver carries a hidden message. Beneath the beak of Raven, Tait carved an inscription that will become visible only when the pole rots and the beak falls away—“long after I’m gone,” Tait says.

Northwest Coast artists and carvers still receive good pay for their art. But even more important than the wages they earn is the pride these artists are restoring in their people. According to Nuuchah-nulth carvers Art Thompson and Tim Paul, “We wanted to carve a pole that would speak of our people’s legends and traditions yet be our own contemporary statement.” As totem poles make a comeback, the proud heritage of the Northwest Coast Indians returns with them.

72. Explain why totem poles continue to be an important part of Northwest Coast Indian culture. Use information from the article to support your answer.

Scoring Guide

Score	Description
4	Response provides a thorough discussion of why totem poles continue to be an important part of Northwest Coast Indian culture. Explanation is well developed and includes highly relevant information from the article as support.
3	Response provides a clear explanation of why totem poles continue to be an important part of Northwest Coast Indian culture. Explanation lacks some development and/or relevant information from the article as support.
2	Response provides a partial explanation of why totem poles continue to be an important part of Northwest Coast Indian culture. Explanation is limited or lacks relevant details from the article as support.
1	Response is vague/minimal.
0	Response is totally incorrect or irrelevant.
Blank	No response.

- Totem poles have always been an important part of the Northwest Coast Indian culture; “they are the trademark of the Northwest Coast Indians.”
- A totem pole continues to be a source of pride for the people who own it.
- Totem poles require great skill and time to create.
- The figures on a totem pole symbolize the history of the people who own them.
- Making the totem poles by hand in the traditional method helps to connect the modern carver with the ancient totem pole carvers.
- Restoring the skill of totem pole carving helps to continue the heritage of the Northwest Coast Indian culture.
- Fascination with totem poles has helped to create interest, understanding, and respect for Northwest Coast Indian culture.

Totem poles used to be extremely important to the Indians of the North West coast, it not only was tradition, but a symbol of their family and a way to express their wealth. As the years progressed various factors affected the decline of Indian culture, which included the totem pole, leaving a vacancy in Indian heritage. This can be attributed mainly to wars, ~~people~~ taking their land and to them being moved to reservations. As the need for totem poles diminished so did the business which created a loss of carvers. ~~Because of this the~~ knowledge was no longer being passed down through the families. Fortunately carvers such as Mungo Martin and the people he passed his knowledge onto helped restore the lost art of carving totem poles. Though technology has made the method easier and a little less authentic, these sacred poles have been resurrected and once again are wanted. People can now show pride and years of tradition and history in their front yard.

For centuries, totem poles have been icons throughout the Northwest Coast region of the United States. They have been used to symbolize many different beliefs and groups of people. Totem poles continue to be an important part of Northwest Coast Indian culture today. While very common in the past, the art almost died out completely in the 1800s with the inception of new laws, such as a ban on potlatching in 1884. However, renewed public interest in these amazing pieces of artwork has encouraged the comeback of native Northwest Coast art. When carver Hungo Martin established the Thunderbird Park program during the 1950s, ... the carving program quickly proved to be of wider importance than anyone had dreamed possible. Initially planned to last three years, it endured more than thirty." Because of increased support and a newfound desire for native art, programs like the Thunderbird Park program continue to be an important part of Northwest Coast Indian Culture.

Score Point 3

Sample 1

Although the art of carving totem poles was nearly washed away, they still continue to be an important part of North West Coast Indian culture. Not until recently has the art of carving totem poles been restored. For instance, artists in this cultural art have begun teaching and passing on skills to other inspiring artists. In return, the newly taught artists pass on their skills, creating a widely accepted view of totem pole art that continues today. Also, not only do North West Coast artists and carvers continue the work on totem poles for the good pay, but for the pride they earn by restoring the art to their people. In conclusion, totem poles will always be an important part of North West Coast Indian culture.

Score Point 3

Sample 2

Totem Poles are very important part of the Northwest Coast Indian culture because it is part of their heritage. Totem Poles represent Indian ancestors from long ago and signifies how great their ancestors really are. Also carving Totem Poles is a very complicated skill and a person has to be very talented to carve them. Finally the main reason is that the Northwest Coast Indian Culture is very proud of their heritage and are showing people by making Totem Poles.

Score Point 2

Sample 1

Totem poles continue to be an important part of Northwest Coast Indian culture because the totem poles were a trademark for the Indians. The totem poles are starting to come back since people are passing on the tradition, on how to make a totem pole.

Score Point 2

Sample 2

Totem poles continue to be an important part of Northwest Coast Indian culture because they pass on the knowledge and what made their ancestors so special. It was very important to have something to remind your generations of family of your ancestors. It is tradition for their culture.

Score Point 1

Sample 1

They are still important because they further the culture and way of life. They have been carving totem poles for hundreds of years.

Score Point 1

Sample 2

Totem Poles continue to be an important part of Northwest Coast Indian culture because this tradition is a proud part of their heritage.

Score Point 0

Sample 1

Totem is how they mark in different places to do one or the other when they play around how much do you want to know. totem has one or the other to use. the word totem has something to do with bring to use, in one pool.

Score Point 0

Sample 2

Totem Poles keep bad spirits away and protect the Native
Catcher

Acknowledgments

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“Totem Pole Carvers: Yesterday and Today” by Toni A. Watson as it appeared in *Cobblestone*, November 1992. Published by Cobblestone Publishing Company. Copyright © 1992 by Carus Publishing Company.